

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of the application is requested.

Claims 1-26 remain in the application. Claims 1-4, 16-17, and 26 have been amended.

In the second paragraph on page 2 of the above-mentioned Office action, claims 1-3, 12, 16, 18, 24, and 26 have been rejected as being anticipated by Gillich (US Pat. No. 4,886,553) under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b).

The rejection has been noted and claims 1-3, 16, and 26 have been amended in an effort to even more clearly define the invention of the instant application. Support for the changes is found on page 20, lines 11-12 of the specification.

Before discussing the prior art in detail, it is believed that a brief review of the invention as claimed, would be helpful.

Claims 1-3, 16, and 26 call for, inter alia:

irreversibly clearing all image information on a surface of the printing form.

Gillich discloses a **cleaner** (not a **clearer**) for lithographic printing plates. According to Gillich, it is customary that a

printing ink is first removed from a lithographic printing plate after printing and that the stained plate is then treated with a plate cleaner for restoring the hydrophilic property of a non-image area (see column 1, lines 60-63).

Further, the plate cleaner disclosed by Gillich can be used to remove background stains of a lithographic printing plate, which are formed in any stage of the plate making through printing. The cleaner exhibits a high ability to remove stains and is free of various problems as encountered with conventional plate cleaners, such as reducing adhesion of an ink to a printing image surface (see column 3, line 63 to column 4, line 4).

Thus, the plate cleaner disclosed by Gillich does not clear all image formation on the surface of a printing form, but restores the hydrophilic property of non-imaged areas, and does not reduce the lipophilic properties of image areas. The plate is not cleared from the image by cleaning the printing plate with a plate cleaner disclosed by Gillich, but in contrast, the original image is restored and can be used for further printing. Gillich, therefore, actually leads a person skilled in the art away from the invention of the instant application.

Clearly, Gillich does not show "irreversibly clearing all image information on a surface of the printing form", as recited in claims 1-3, 16, and 26 of the instant application.

Claims 1-3, 16, and 26 are, therefore, believed to be patentable over Gillich and since claims 12, 18, and 24 are dependent on claims 1 or 16, they are believed to be patentable as well.

In the penultimate paragraph on page 2 of the above-mentioned Office action, claims 4 and 19 have been rejected as being unpatentable over Gillich in view of Nüssel et al. (US Pat. No. 5,317,970) under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

As discussed above, claim 16 is believed to be patentable over the art. Since claim 19 is dependent on claim 16, it is believed to be patentable as well.

With regard to claim 4, claim 4 has been amended in an effort to even more clearly define the invention of the instant application. Support for the changes is found on page 20, lines 11-12 of the specification.

Before discussing the prior art in detail, it is believed that a brief review of the invention as claimed, would be helpful.

Claim 4 calls for, inter alia:

treating the printing form with a gaseous clearing medium in a non-abrasive manner, irreversibly clearing all image information on a surface of the printing form.

As discussed above, Gillich does not disclose "irreversibly clearing all image information on a surface of the printing form", as recited in claim 4 of the instant application.

Nüssel et al. disclose a method for reversibly regenerating an imaged printing form and thus also do not disclose

"irreversibly clearing all image information on a surface of the printing form", as recited in claim 4 of the instant application.

In addition, Nüssel et al. disclose removing hydrophobic particles from a surface of a hydrophilic printing plate by applying an ionized reactive gas (a plasma) to the surface of the printing plate. Thus, the method of Nüssel et al. is an abrasive method and does not use a liquid or a gaseous clearing medium, but a plasma (which is a fourth chemical state other than solid, liquid and gaseous).

It is accordingly believed to be clear that none of the references, whether taken alone or in any combination, either show or suggest the features of claim 4. Claim 4 is, therefore, believed to be patentable over the art.

In the second paragraph on page 3 of the above-mentioned Office action, claims 5, 9, 15, and 20 have been rejected as being unpatentable over Gillich in view of Gydesen (US Pat. No. 5,644,986) under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

As discussed above, claims 1 and 16 are believed to be patentable over the art. Since claims 5, 9, 15, and 20 are ultimately dependent on claims 1 or 16, they are believed to be patentable as well.

In the penultimate paragraph on page 3 of the above-mentioned Office action, claims 17 and 25 have been rejected as being unpatentable over Gillich under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

As discussed above, claim 16 is believed to be patentable over the art. Since claim 25 is dependent on claim 16, it is believed to be patentable as well.

With regard to claim 17, claim 17 has been amended in an effort to even more clearly define the invention of the

instant application. Support for the changes is found on page 20, lines 11-12 of the specification.

Before discussing the prior art in detail, it is believed that a brief review of the invention as claimed, would be helpful.

Claim 17 calls for, inter alia:

irreversibly clearing all image information on a surface of the printing form.

As discussed above, Gillich does not disclose "irreversibly clearing all image information on a surface of the printing form", as recited in claim 17 of the instant application. Claim 17 is, therefore, believed to be patentable over the art.

In the second paragraph on page 4 of the above-mentioned Office action, claim 13 has been rejected as being unpatentable over Gillich in view of Nüssel et al. and further in view of Shin et al. (US Pat. No. 6,148,728) under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

As discussed above, claim 4 is believed to be patentable over the art. Since claim 13 is dependent on claim 4, it is believed to be patentable as well.

In the penultimate paragraph on page 4 of the above-mentioned Office action, claims 6-8, 10-12, 14, and 21-22 have been rejected as being unpatentable over Gillich in view of Koguchi et al. (US Pat. No. 6,082,263) under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

As discussed above, claims 1 and 16 are believed to be patentable over the art. Since claims 6-8, 10-12, 14, and 21-22 are ultimately dependent on claims 1 or 16, they are believed to be patentable as well.

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of claims 1-26 are solicited.

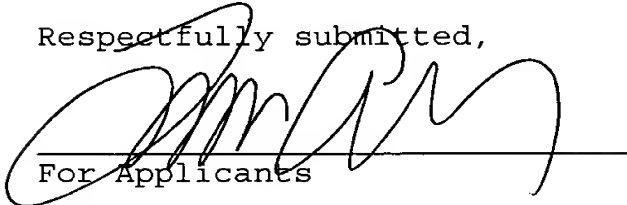
In the event the Examiner should still find any of the claims to be unpatentable, counsel would appreciate a telephone call so that, if possible, patentable language can be worked out. In the alternative, the entry of the amendment is requested as it is believed to place the application in better condition for appeal, without requiring extension of the field of search.

If an extension of time for this paper is required, petition for extension is herewith made. Please charge any fees which might be due with respect to Sections 1.16 and 1.17 to the

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Respectfully submitted,



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